

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners, A functioning democracy depends upon informed citizens - people who know and understand the facts about issues and policies and the candidates who will have the power and responsibility to deal with them. The public airways, used for free by a mostly for-profit media, are the most far-reaching and powerful means of providing that information. And it is up to you, the members of the FCC, to insist that those broadcasters provide it. Our need for real information and their responsibility to provide it are not being met.

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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